

**From:** DMH Information  
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**Subject:** DMH Implementing New Community Mental Health Treatment Program



# News Release

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### ***DMH IMPLEMENTING NEW COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT PROGRAM***

**JEFFERSON CITY, MO., JANUARY 7, 2008** -- The Department of Mental Health (DMH) has awarded funding for an innovative, specialized approach to serving people with mental illnesses, for whom traditional care has not been effective.

"We must be innovative in seeking new approaches to meet the mental health needs of Missourians," Gov. Matt Blunt said. "Assertive Community Treatment will help those Missourians address their mental health needs who have not responded to traditional treatment."

Assertive Community Treatment, or ACT, is a method of service that utilizes community teams to provide intensive services to people with the most serious and persistent mental illnesses and who often have not responded to traditional care. Assertive Community Treatment is characterized by low staff-to-client ratios (1-10), and a total team approach where all team members work with the clients, and nearly all services are provided in the community rather than in staff offices.

"It is a new approach to mental health services in Missouri and we are fortunate to benefit from the years of experience in other states," said Joe Parks, M. D., Director of the Division of Comprehensive Psychiatric Services in the Department of Mental Health. "These Missourians are hard to reach and to keep in treatment. They are among the most challenging in our system."

"ACT has been shown to be effective for people with particular diagnoses, such as Schizophrenia and Bi-polar disorder, who often experience co-occurring chemical health problems, other medical conditions, and who are sometimes homeless," Parks said.

Funding for the new program is part of the DMH appropriations approved by the Legislature and signed by Governor Blunt. The approximately \$1.8 million state funding, combined with federal funds and local resources, will provide mental health services and supports for about 400 people.

Assertive Community Treatment will be operated in St. Louis by BJC Healthcare, working with Community Alternatives, St. Patrick's Center, and Places for People; in Kansas City by Truman Behavioral Health; in Springfield by Burrell Behavioral Health; and in St. Joseph by Family Guidance Center. The teams will commence implementation in the first part of 2008. Assertive Community Treatment teams include a full array of professional staff working together for the benefit of the client. Team members include a psychiatrist, nurse, specialists in employment and substance abuse, a peer specialist, and case managers.

Parks said the Assertive Community Treatment method has been researched for many years with specific types of mental illnesses, and has been used in many states and abroad. Assertive Community Treatment was originally developed in Madison, Wisconsin, when professionals decided to try a new way of helping people with serious mental illnesses remain stable in the community. The method has been proven to reduce hospital days and increase recovery, if done according to research guidelines.

Assertive Community Treatment is one of several Evidence Based Practices that Missouri is pursuing, and working together with the Missouri Mental Health Transformation Grant aimed at making fundamental changes in the state's mental health service delivery system.